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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 15 July 2003, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. KUCHINSKY (Ukraine)
(Vice-President)

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SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE
(continued)

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In the absence of Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine), Vice-President, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (agenda item 5) (continued) (A/58/85-E/2003/80 and Add.1, A/58/89-E/2003/85, A/58/99-E/2003/94 and A/57/821-E/2003/86)

Ms. DE HOZ (Argentina) said that humanitarian assistance should be provided to those in need according to the principles contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182. She stressed the importance of providing timely, coordinated and technically sound assistance in search and rescue operations in urban areas, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/150. To improve coordination and make optimum use of available resources, the consolidated inter-agency appeal mechanism should be strengthened and robust coordination structures maintained within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Her delegation welcomed the adoption of the plan of action prepared by the Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises, containing the core principles of a code of conduct for humanitarian workers, and the adoption of the Agenda for Protection by the Executive Committee of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It supported the "Four Rs" initiative of UNHCR and its close cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in addressing the complex phenomenon of mixed flows of migrants and refugees.

Lastly, she stressed that, in the transition from relief to development, the long-term needs of the country concerned must be taken into account and its Government closely involved in the planning and delivery of assistance.

Mr. IKOUEBE (Congo), having associated his delegation with the statement by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the capacity of the United Nations to react to humanitarian emergencies was gradually improving, as shown by its preparations for the recent war in Iraq. More emphasis still needed to be placed, however, on improving monitoring and early-warning systems: prompt action was particularly important in the immediate aftermath of conflicts in order to prevent the resumption of hostilities. Some kind of framework was also needed to render possible a quick transition from the humanitarian phase to the development phase; for example, activities in areas such as education and agriculture needed to be resumed in order to reintegrate internally displaced persons and refugees. At the

same time, the institutional capacity of the State concerned needed to be strengthened, and United Nations country teams, the Government and other partners should ensure their actions were effectively coordinated.

Bearing all those points in mind, his Government had adopted a post-conflict programme for 2000-2002 to revive economic growth, strengthen administrative capacities and protect the population. Unfortunately, donors treated some crises more favourably than others and not all the external resources it had expected to receive for the programme had been forthcoming. Nevertheless, the United Nations agencies had had the foresight to draw up plans to provide emergency aid if necessary, even while fighting continued in parts of the country, and his Government had, with similar foresight, prepared a new programme for 2003-2004 that took account of the prospect of a return to normal life throughout the country.

The United Nations agencies' joint response to the new challenges had been coordinated with the Government and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and was based on a range of projects that would contribute to the implementation of the programme to combat poverty. Such a partnership not only helped strengthen the national capacity to respond to emergencies but also laid the foundations for the consolidation of peace and for reconstruction and development. At the same time, the Government was hoping to benefit from the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative and thus release the resources needed to finance a policy of reconstruction and sustainable development.

Mr. MARTABIT SCAFF (Chile) said that his Government's efforts in the area of humanitarian assistance were focused on emergencies stemming from natural disasters. It provided emergency and health workers when emergencies arose in other Latin American countries and had signed agreements with Argentina and Peru on cooperation in that respect. At the international level, it channelled its aid through the United Nations. Close coordination with the authorities of the country affected was important to ensure that aid was used effectively and that the transition from relief to development was smooth, as shown by the experience of the United Nations in Afghanistan, where Chile had contributed agricultural experts as part of a tripartite programme involving Norway and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

With regard to the impact of HIV/AIDS on humanitarian relief operations, his delegation believed that the discussion within the Council should not rely solely on input from Governments and international agencies but should also take into account scientific and academic input and the contribution of civil society organizations.

His delegation attached great importance to the international community's efforts to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population in an armed conflict, especially that of the most vulnerable members of society. The Council should endeavour to create a climate of confidence in humanitarian activities. Such confidence would be forthcoming only if humanitarian assistance was impartial and transparent and if humanitarian workers complied fully with national laws and respected the human dignity of the people they were trying to help.

Mr. LEHNE (Observer for Norway) said that the growing complexity of humanitarian emergencies and the increasing numbers of people affected by them had increased the need for humanitarian assistance, but donor resources were limited and ways had to be found to use them more effectively. A sustained and adequate financial commitment was required of donors and donor coordination needed improvement. His Government supported initiatives to provide more predictable needs-based funding and to establish the principles of good donorship. While the mechanisms for the international coordination of emergency assistance had improved considerably, particularly through the consolidated appeals process (CAP), considerable challenges still lay ahead.

There had been too many examples over the years of protracted crises that had been almost forgotten by the international community once they were no longer in the media spotlight. More attention needed to be paid to the difficult period between the receipt of humanitarian assistance and the arrival of more long-term aid. His Government had therefore established a specific budgetary allocation for transitional projects.

It had also set aside considerable additional resources to meet the humanitarian challenge in Iraq, where interaction with the Coalition Provisional Authority posed a serious challenge to the coordination of humanitarian assistance. His Government appreciated the key role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in setting up contingency plans in and around Iraq and in coordinating assistance efforts with the occupying Powers. It also appreciated highly the guidelines on the use of military and civil defence assets to support United Nations humanitarian activities in complex emergencies.

His delegation welcomed the extension of the mandate of the OCHA Internally Displaced Persons Unit; the Unit, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement remained important tools in the efforts to solve the complex problems of the growing number of internally displaced persons.

Mr. FRANCIS (Jamaica) said that humanitarian financing and the transition from relief to development were central to the humanitarian operations of the United Nations system and to any attempt to define an approach to humanitarian assistance. The approach must also be guided by the principle that any effective response required durable solutions, which could be identified only if Governments and the international community improved their collaborative efforts to address both the effects and the causes of humanitarian emergencies.

The transition from relief to development should be a coherent process involving Governments, the donor community, the United Nations system and civil society. Consequently, the work of the Joint Working Group on Transition Issues was invaluable. He noted with concern, however, the continued gap in funding between relief and development activities. It was crucial to fund during the relief phase not only the life-saving interventions but also infrastructural development and long-term social development, which were critical for economic growth.

The challenge facing the donor community was to increase the level, predictability and equitable distribution of assistance to ensure that adequate funding was available to mitigate the effects of crises. Although humanitarian aid had doubled since 1990, it was still below the level required and was mainly driven by the visibility of particular crises. Moreover the increase in humanitarian assistance had occurred during a period of decline in official development assistance (ODA). Humanitarian assistance should not involve a diversion of resources from international cooperation for development, nor should it be a substitute for ODA.

The vast majority of emergencies to which the international community was called upon to respond were caused by natural disasters. The social, economic and environmental effects of such disasters on the prospects of the developing countries were severe. The Governments of small developing countries required strong support not only in terms of emergency assistance, but also in building capacity in the early warning and monitoring, preparedness and response areas. Some progress had been made in coordinating the approach to humanitarian crises within

the United Nations system so as to ensure that timely and predictable funding was available to strengthen the capacity of those in need to prevent and mitigate the effects of such crises, but much still remained to be done.

Mr. GRILLET (Intergovernmental Institution for the Use of Micro-alga Spirulina against Malnutrition) informed the Council of the many advantages that the micro-alga Spirulina offered as a source of protein, vitamins and minerals, as a dietary supplement for undernourished populations and as an emergency foodstuff. Spirulina was a natural food supplement that had been used by human beings for centuries and was widely cultivated in many countries. When mixed with cereals, it could restore severely undernourished persons to health within two or three weeks, much more rapidly than any other treatment. It was also effective in oral rehydration treatments, strengthened the immune system and could prevent the viruses responsible for AIDS and other viral diseases from entering human blood cells. In addition, thanks to its high level of vitamin A (beta-carotene), it had proved useful in helping to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV and in preventing xerophthalmia, a disease that caused blindness. Moreover, crops of Spirulina helped to reduce the greenhouse effect by absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen.

His organization had been invited by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to study the feasibility of setting up a large-scale production project in Zambia and to develop production and harvesting techniques suitable for use at the village level. In that connection, it was working with the Ministry of Agriculture of France to train people to implement the projects in States that had signed the Convention for the Use of Food Micro-alga. He called on all States and international organizations to sign the Convention and requested that a proposal to set up a United Nations Spirulina programme should be submitted to the General Assembly at its next session. Such a programme would enhance food security in developing countries and help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Mr. MANIS (Observer for Sudan), having endorsed the statement by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and welcomed the comprehensive, objective report of the Secretary-General (A/58/89-E/2003/85), called on all parties involved in humanitarian assistance to respect the Guiding Principles contained in General Assembly

resolution 46/182. In his own country, the rebels had recently agreed to a ceasefire with the Government, leading to a more stable framework for humanitarian assistance and he appealed to the international community to continue to support the people of Sudan in the more peaceful times that lay ahead.

His delegation was concerned about the situation of civilians affected by armed conflict, and called on all States to fulfil their international obligations with regard to humanitarian and human rights law. Financing for humanitarian assistance was still inadequate to cover the full range of needs. For example, a recent appeal for the Sudan had failed to reach 30 per cent of its target amount. The successful approach of placing HIV/AIDS at the centre of humanitarian assistance strategies in Southern Africa should be extended to include other killer diseases such as malaria and cholera. Malaria affected over 300 million people every year, and 90 per cent of the related deaths were in Africa. Additional support should be given to the least developed countries, whose populations were even more vulnerable than those elsewhere, owing to the absence of infrastructure and the weakness of the State.

Mr. ROSENTHAL (Guatemala), having associated his delegation with the views expressed by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the tools needed to respond to the problems falling within the humanitarian segment were already available. The Guiding Principles contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182, although not legally binding, provided a normative framework with widespread international acceptance. Nevertheless, it was important to determine how to finance activities so that they became adequate to cover immediate needs, and to ensure that they were distributed on an equitable basis.

His delegation shared many of the concerns expressed in the report of the Secretary-General, such as the possibility that humanitarian assistance might take place at the expense of cooperation. The occurrence of HIV/AIDS, as well as malaria, tuberculosis and cholera, in crisis situations had resulted in a redefinition of traditional humanitarian assistance strategies. He consequently welcomed the inclusion of a panel to address HIV/AIDS in the current humanitarian segment of the Council.

The need for coherence among humanitarian, political, human rights and development actions must be addressed. That not only required work on the infrastructure already existing within the United Nations, it also needed the sustained commitment of the Member States, both donors and recipients.

Mr. FERRER RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Although the occurrence of natural disasters had more than tripled over the last three decades, the lack of capacity to reduce the impact of natural hazards and environmental emergencies remained a major problem, especially in the developing countries. It was therefore important to strengthen the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

Three quarters of the world's population lived in developing countries that were frequently affected by natural disasters and, consequently, by poverty and disease. The limited funds available to assist them were distributed unequally for geopolitical, economic and strategic reasons, raising doubts about the humanitarian, neutral and impartial nature of the assistance. It was an unfortunate fact that crises resulting from natural disasters were quickly forgotten by the international community. Adequate, flexible and predictable resources were needed to ensure that humanitarian aid was timely, adequate and effective. Greater international cooperation was also needed to build national capacities and to remove the obstacles at the international level that prevented the transition from relief to development.

Although affected States had the primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within their territories, they were also obliged to engage in international cooperation in the sphere of human rights and in the solution of international humanitarian problems. It was to be hoped, therefore, that all the policies, strategies and guidelines contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/89-E/2003/85) would be subjected to careful consideration, negotiation and approval by all the Member States.

Mr. De RIVERO (Peru) called for an end to the impunity of anyone guilty of attacks on humanitarian personnel and, in particular, for the release of Mr. Arjan Erkel, who had been held captive for almost a year in Chechnya. Humanitarian affairs had grown to encompass issues as wide-ranging as gender, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters and the transition to development,

to the extent that they had become the main focus of United Nations activities. It was clear proof that the Organization was failing in its principal task of maintaining international peace and security. In future, reports concerning humanitarian assistance should also draw the attention of the Security Council to its responsibility to prevent and resolve the conflicts that created the need for such assistance.

The concept of transition to development was not only a vague one but was in fact misleading. It created the false impression that development was just around the corner. In reality, most developing countries had not grown at all or had failed to achieve the 3 per cent annual growth needed to begin combating poverty. Over 4,800 million people continued to live on just two or three dollars per day. That was why, realistically, MDGs had established poverty reduction, and not development, as the initial priority. Unless the same pragmatic approach was adopted in post-emergency situations, donors would continue to be discouraged by the impossibility of setting precise targets for the elusive transition to development.

The most effective and least controversial work done by the United Nations in the area of humanitarian assistance was to be found in its response to natural disasters. In that connection, he mentioned the swift response to Hurricane Mitch in Central America, and to the earthquakes in Algeria and Turkey. Those and similar operations had significantly enhanced the reputation of the United Nations. Consequently, his delegation had joined that of Turkey in sponsoring General Assembly resolution 57/150 on strengthening the effectiveness and coordination of international urban search and rescue assistance. He urged countries to take that resolution into account when developing national contingency plans for natural disasters. Greater efforts should be made to attract financing from the private sector to respond to natural disasters. OCHA should publish an annual report on its natural disaster response activities, so that the United Nations could build on its positive results in that area.

Mr. CHIPAZIWA (Zimbabwe) said that southern Africa was facing a series of severe socio-economic challenges that exceeded the capacity of the national Governments to handle. Humanitarian assistance should focus on long-term solutions there, with a view to facilitating the transition from relief to development. His Government operated a number of social programmes, based on the principle of food in exchange for public work, which were

designed to reduce the dependency syndrome and empower communities to set their own local development priorities. Humanitarian assistance agencies should complement government efforts by tying food aid to work for the able-bodied. Furthermore, they should avoid creating parallel structures, likely to create distribution imbalances and undermine government programmes.

His delegation supported the need for greater integration of a gender perspective into emergency relief operations. In its distribution of food aid in Zimbabwe, the World Food Programme (WFP) had successfully targeted women, and that had not only empowered women but also complemented their traditional role as the custodians of food. He called for improved contingency planning and coordination between humanitarian actors. The United Nations should continue to assist States in building national capacities to cope with transitory shocks, such as drought, and to overcome chronic poverty. In view of the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS in southern Africa, a fresh approach to humanitarian emergencies was urgently needed. His Government stressed the importance of financing an effective transitional process from relief to development, particularly in the case of agricultural recovery.

Humanitarian assistance should not be allowed to grow, however, at the expense of ODA. Humanitarian aid was also uneven and not clearly needs-based. For instance, following the Southern African Consolidated Appeal, the response for food aid had been very good, while assistance for non-food aid, covering HIV/AIDS programmes, water, sanitation and agricultural recovery, had been insufficient. The effectiveness of humanitarian assistance was dependent upon the timeliness of the response, as well as the predictability of funding by donors. He called for enhanced coordination in those areas.

Mr. GRAISSE (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that the coordination mechanism had proved that collaboration between diverse humanitarian actors was both possible and necessary. Much still remained to be done, however, and ongoing efforts were being made to encourage further coordination under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Food was essential but it was not enough. In most emergencies, it was advisable to provide food aid in conjunction with other forms of assistance, specifically help with water,

sanitation, health, nutrition, education and agriculture, to ensure that food aid had maximum impact and could be phased out as soon as possible. Coordination among all the humanitarian assistance providers was therefore absolutely imperative if emergencies were to be addressed in an integrated manner.

Coordination arrangements required continual review and improvement, for example by involving a broader range of stakeholders. The number of food emergencies had increased dramatically and key donors had boosted their contributions as a result, but resources were still inadequate and WFP had been forced to make painful choices, for example curtailing its operations in North Korea, Afghanistan, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania. The situation in Iraq and the Middle East had further complicated the picture. Contingency planning had become the new watchword.

Mr. SOEMARNO (Observer for Indonesia) said that, as the principal coordinators and providers of humanitarian assistance to beneficiaries, Governments welcomed international cooperation to tackle the aftermath of natural disasters and complex emergencies. However, international assistance should always complement national efforts and be administered by the national Governments of the recipient countries. Assistance should be provided with the consent and at the request of recipient countries, in a way that respected their sovereignty and integrity.

Humanitarian resources were not always commensurate with needs, and budget shortfalls had occurred. His Government believed that adequate resources should be channelled through multilateral assistance programmes, the only means of ensuring a balanced and comprehensive global response. Under no circumstances should the distinction between humanitarian assistance and ODA be blurred. His Government called for a strengthened response to humanitarian emergencies and a strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations to prepare for them. Given the resources currently available in the developed world, there could be little excuse for a lack of predictable and adequate funding for humanitarian needs. Even if needy populations were partially responsible for their own situation, it was still the responsibility of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance.

Member States had clearly defined responsibilities towards specific groups such as civilians, internally displaced persons and sexually abused victims of conflicts and disasters.

The international community should adequately assist the developing countries to strengthen their capacity, at both the national and regional levels, by establishing and enhancing integrated programmes, for example. For its part, his Government had taken both legal and practical steps to ensure that, following the various natural disasters in the country, humanitarian assistance was well managed and reached its intended recipients.

Mr. ESSEL (Ghana), having associated his delegation with the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that recent and ongoing conflicts in West Africa were continuing to cause significant humanitarian problems. Ghana had received large numbers of refugees who were offered protection and humanitarian assistance out of the country's limited resources. As a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Ghana had been actively involved in efforts to manage and resolve the various conflicts in the West African subregion, but effective implementation of the principles of protection of civilians during conflict and the maintenance of humanitarian standards required strengthened coordination on a wide range of issues, such as halting the proliferation of small arms engendered by the various civil conflicts in the region, demobilizing and reintegrating the combatants and easing the transition from relief to development by addressing the suspicions and grievances that had led to the conflict in the first place. Lastly, any coherent strategy for restoring stability and normality in the wake of conflict should also focus on the need to repair the damage caused to the economies of the refugee-hosting countries.

Ms. MOHAMED (Kenya), said her delegation fully associated itself with the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Kenya was a prey to drought, HIV/AIDS, flooding and terrorism, and, furthermore, had been adversely affected by civil conflicts in neighbouring countries through an influx of refugees and of illicit weapons. Provision of emergency relief supplies to communities in drought-prone areas would never be an optimum solution because it failed to tackle the root causes of vulnerability. Her Government and its development partners were working to reduce disaster risks through diversification of production, better market access, investment in water management and preservation of livelihoods through the Arid Lands Resource Programme, funded by the World Bank. Overall, there had been a shift from the gratuitous distribution of relief assistance to income-generating schemes and food-for-work programmes.

The adverse effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic included high health-care costs, unsustainable changes in the population structure, reduced productivity and food insecurity, and the loss of skilled workers. Her Government had declared the epidemic a national disaster and established an institutional framework to manage the crisis. It was also important to remember that HIV/AIDS was a global pandemic requiring international cooperation and solutions. Access to cheap anti-viral drugs would therefore be of tremendous help in managing the epidemic in Africa.

Most of the refugees from neighbouring and other African countries were living in areas of Kenya with fragile ecosystems. Voluntary return was the most durable and sustainable solution to refugee problems but required the restoration of political stability and peace in the refugees' countries of origin. The international community could help to resolve the refugee problem by acting in an integrated manner, and by adhering to the principle of burden-sharing. The decline in the level of funding for voluntary repatriations was of particular concern and should be addressed.

Recent floods in Kenya had caused enormous material damage, not least to the road network. While welcoming external emergency relief, her Government urged aid providers to procure food and non-food supplies from local or regional markets so as not to destabilize production and domestic market prices.

The threat of terrorism had devastated the Kenyan tourist industry. It was important to remember that no country in the world was immune from terrorist attacks, so official advice to the effect that Kenya was an unsafe destination was very misguided.

Preparedness, prevention and mitigation programmes were assumed to be part of the disaster management cycle, but they received scant funding from national budgets and external donor sources. Much more could be done to prevent catastrophes. As long as attention remained focused on inadequate and short-term emergency relief operations, it would not be possible to achieve the MDGs in most of sub-Saharan Africa. The international community should therefore channel more resources into the developing countries to fortify their capacity to cope with disasters.

Mr. KASTBERG (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the Council's current session had witnessed real progress on a number of issues such as humanitarian financing, the need for flexible, earmarked donor contributions, and the whole subject of transition to development, with the attendant need for combined consolidated and transitional appeals. A real effort had been made to address the issue of sexual violence against girls in humanitarian crises and, for the first time, the topic of HIV/AIDS had moved to the top of the agenda. UNICEF particularly appreciated the recognition that civilian organizations had a leading role to play in implementing humanitarian assistance, especially in situations where military capacity and assets were used to support such implementation. Coordination in the humanitarian assistance sphere was very much a way of life.

Mr. AMURANI-PHIRI (Observer for Malawi), having expressed his delegation's support for the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the real value of the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/89-E/2003/85) lay in the fact that it challenged all stakeholders to make a collective effort and demonstrate a political will to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

Apart from stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS, the biggest challenge facing his country was addressing the problems arising from natural disasters such as drought and floods. In recent months, scores of fatalities had occurred as a result of food shortages resulting from a lengthy period of drought. While Malawi had benefited from some humanitarian assistance, less than a tenth of the pledges made in 2002 as part of the CAP had materialized. As a result, the country's local resources were being placed under increasing strain. Nevertheless, Malawi was trying to revive and rebuild its agriculture sector with a view to promoting sustainable national food security and poverty eradication.

There was clearly a need for intensified coordination and consultations between the headquarters of United Nations relief agencies and their field operations to optimize the use of resources and to renew the faith of the donor community and the trust of the beneficiaries. Increased inter-agency cooperation and close liaison with recipient Governments were also necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to those who needed it. It was to be hoped that the Council would lead the way in strengthening emergency preparedness and coordination at all levels.

His delegation mourned the relief workers who had lost their lives while serving the victims of humanitarian crises. Given the recent upsurge in violent acts against such workers at a time when their help was most needed, it was essential to consider whether it was the Economic and Social Council or the Security Council which was better placed to protect the safety and security of humanitarian workers. As a matter of urgency, the two Councils should cooperate in devising feasible protection mechanisms for United Nations personnel in the field.

Mr. MEYER (Brazil), having endorsed the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed his appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General and the recommendations it contained. His delegation wished to underscore the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and coordinating the efforts of the international community to support those in need of humanitarian assistance. He noted with concern, however, that humanitarian assistance was distributed unevenly and that decisions to allocate resources were based on political considerations rather than on need. The lack of support for "forgotten emergencies" was particularly regrettable. A set of principles of good donorship behaviour and practice should be established.

The donor community should place more trust in the United Nations system of coordination and create mechanisms to assist the United Nations in its work. At the same time, the organizations of the United Nations system should improve the way in which humanitarian needs were assessed. The provision of funds for humanitarian assistance should not be detrimental to the provision of resources for international cooperation for development.

Reiterating the need to address the strategic planning gap between relief and development activities, he said that sectors such as water, sanitation, agriculture, health and education, which could provide a bridge between relief and development, continued to receive insufficient funding. Furthermore, while funds were poured into relief assistance in highly visible emergencies, resources dwindled when it came to laying the foundations for future recovery and development. If that funding gap was not addressed, there was a risk that only the symptoms of the problem would be treated and not the root causes.

It was essential to ensure that the long-term development implications of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in emergency situations were adequately addressed. His Government was willing to work with the United Nations agencies and the donor community to help countries curb the spread of the disease.

The safety of humanitarian staff continued to be a matter of high priority. Although the primary responsibility for delivering assistance and addressing the root causes of a crisis lay with the States themselves, a State that was unable to provide adequate assistance was obliged to ensure the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel. The International Criminal Court could play an important role in bringing to justice those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The use of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement by an increasing number of Member States was positive and should be encouraged. The Guiding Principles were a useful tool because they provided practitioners and field workers with a quick reference guide on the provisions of international, humanitarian, human rights and refugee law.

In conclusion, he said that the Council would be able to provide political guidance to the United Nations system only if it adopted a victim-centred approach to humanitarian emergencies.

Mr. ALABI (Nigeria) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Welcoming the comprehensive and balanced report of the Secretary-General, he said that, in the absence of effective safeguards for the collective and personal security of humanitarian staff, it would be difficult to sustain the level of their commitment. His delegation, therefore, supported the Secretary-General's call on Member States to ensure that those responsible for attacks against humanitarian staff were brought to justice. Likewise, it was essential to develop a culture of protection for civilians through the organization of regional workshops and seminars.

It was necessary to rethink and redefine strategies and policy frameworks to strengthen the coordination of responses to complex crises, with due regard for the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality. If relief aid was to satisfy the needs of the people affected, it had to be adequate, effective, flexible and timely. The assistance provided in the first twenty-four hours following an incident was crucial. However, more emphasis should be given

to developing early warning strategies. A conflict response based on early warning could be cost-effective in the prevention and management of impacts and could help to save lives. Furthermore, Member States should commit themselves to promoting good and transparent governance, human rights, peace and justice and also to addressing injustice, corruption, poverty and debt, which were the root causes of conflict. In addition, resources should be made available for capacity-building, so that States were able to respond effectively in complex emergencies. It was also essential to accord priority attention to the empowerment of women and to encourage their participation in development and humanitarian work.

A meaningful transition process should involve proper coordination and planning and should have adequate resources. The ultimate goal must be the alleviation of the mass suffering of crisis-affected populations and the restoration of peace and social, economic and political stability. Transition should be managed effectively to achieve rehabilitation, reconstruction, resettlement and reintegration. The process should facilitate the restoration of essential infrastructure, including access to markets, basic social services and peace and stability as prerequisites for sustainable development.

His Government was ready to provide continued support for all United Nations humanitarian activities. With the necessary funding and resources, coupled with the existing spirit of cooperation and partnership among all the Member States, humanitarian actors and donors, it should be possible to strengthen the coordination of all humanitarian and relief activities throughout the world.

Dr. NABARRO (World Health Organization) said that promoting health during a crisis was everybody's business. Too many of the health systems established in response to crisis situations were found to be failing the people they had been designed to serve. Unless appropriate efforts were made to safeguard people's health in crisis situations, all other interventions might prove to be irrelevant. It was important that all stakeholders should work together, as health professionals alone could not respond to people's health needs during a crisis. It was also essential to learn from both success and failure so as to ensure a better response to the health needs of people in crisis situations. Learning from past experiences and sharing the knowledge gained would improve coordination among the different actors.

He noted with satisfaction that a panel discussion had been held during the Council's session on the importance of controlling and combating communicable diseases, because protecting people's health was critical to crisis prevention and recovery. More attention was being devoted to human nutrition and to the mental health of victims. He welcomed the fact that the international community had at last recognized that violence was a major cause of ill health in crisis-affected communities.

Providing information at times of crisis was essential to ensure that those most in need received adequate assistance and to guarantee that the best results were achieved with the investments made. The humanitarian community had shown a commitment to combating the suffering caused by serious crises but that commitment had to be followed up with financing, action and results. It was to be hoped that the efforts made to address the ill health and suffering of crisis-affected communities would match those made within the food aid sector.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.